

**SIMON PERCHIK**

**[With just a rifle, lean, taut]**

With just a rifle, lean, taut  
and though there's no helmet  
one eye is swollen, keeps staring

which means the boots no longer move  
—in such a silence you hear  
a marching song, still warm

from the foundry when this toy  
was molten iron and step by step  
setting fires with ink from letters home

black, blacker till there's no star  
where North should be—that  
and why are you holding it so deft

helping it guide each night down  
in the dew you dead still listen for  
spreading out behind this dam

half hillside, half being built  
with so many unknowns  
rusting in place, one by one.